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Beowulf 33

No one rendering of the lines in *Beowulf* (32-33) describing the ship on which Scyld is to undertake his last journey has received the unanimous support of scholars. Although most cling to the reading of the MS. *ísig* and translate that with "icy, or shining like ice," few seem to do so with a good conscience. Sievers, to be sure, comes to the rescue of it: "Es ergibt sich sofort eine schöne und sinnvolle formel, wenn man bei dem wörtlichen sinn von *ísig* stehn bleibt, und der ist 'beeist' . . . Die situation ist einfach diese. Es ist winterzeit, und darum liegt das schiff 'beeist' (und untätig, vgl. 1125 ff.) im hafen. . . ." ¹

Trautmann ² rejects this because nothing whatsoever is said of winter in this passage. I may add that, intrinsically, such a special condition as a ship being icy ill agrees with the ancient style, which dwells on the typical aspect of things. Moreover, ships were kept safely on land in winter. Trautmann also urges that adjectives connected with *ond* ought to have similar meanings. We ought, then, to expect something similar to *ūtfūs*.

Holthausen's suggestion ³ that *ísig* may stand in ablaut relation to O. N. *eisa*, 'to rush,' is open to the same objection. Also, *eisa* has rather the connotation of 'foaming'; cf. *eisandi úðr*, 'foaming wave.' Would *fāmigheals ond ūtfūs* seem to possess unity of expression?

Assuming corruption of the text Sv. Grundtvig proposed the emendation *ȝðig* (*ēaðig*) to furnish a rendering 'shining, splendid'; but this is unwarranted since the adjective uniformly means only 'easy, pleasant.' And Trautmann (*l. c.*) had asked "gab es ein adj. *ícig* (*ítig, ífg*), 'glänzend'?"

As in so many other cases we have to think of the Scandinavian origin of the poem and suspect some poetic term which may have been forgotten in later Ags. or as *ἀπ. λεγ.* was misunderstood by the scribe. O. N. *ítr, ítarligr* would answer in every respect. It appears prevailingly in poetic monuments. *E. g. veizla búin ítarlīga*, 'a splendidly prepared banquet'; *ítr álití*, 'of shining presence'; *inn ítri óþlingr*, 'the splendid hero'; *alt vas ítarligt of órar ferðar*, 'our court was a splendid one.' Most instructive, in this connection, is the following passage of the *Vǫlsungasaga*: 'A great host is now got ready for him and most carefully equipped, both as to ships and all manner of ornaments so that his expedition should be even more honorable than before. Sigurd steered the dragon ship which was the largest and the most excellent. Their sails were chosen with great care and were splendid to look at' (*segl þeira váru mjök vönduð ok itarlig at sjá*). Of Scyld's ship we are told

¹ *Beiträge*, XXVII, 572.

² *Bonner Beiträge zur Anglistik*, XVII, 152; *Beiblatt zur Anglia*, XXIV, 42.

³ *Beiblatt zur Anglia*, XIV, 84.

'no ship have I known so nobly dight with weapons of war and weeds of battle.' Thus *itig ond ūtfūs*, 'splendid and ready' ⁴ for the journey,' becomes a fine poetic description of a gaudy Viking ship ⁵ all ready for the ocean, with its vari-colored sail set and filled with the breeze, and the gold-wove banner royal waving from the mast-head.⁶

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ENGLISH ADAPTATIONS OF VOLTAIRE'S PLAYS

Professor Lounsbury, in *Shakespeare and Voltaire* (pp. 304-306), and Professor Nettleton, in *The Cambridge History of English Literature* (x, 439), and in *English Drama of The Restoration and Eighteenth Century* (pp. 198 ff., 235 ff.), name adaptations of twelve of Voltaire's plays performed on the English stage from 1734 to 1776. These are *Junius Brutus*, by William Duncombe; *Zara*, *Alzira*, and *Merope*, by Aaron Hill; *Mahomet the Imposter*, by James Miller and John Hoadly; *The Orphan of China*, and *No One's Enemy But His Own*, by Arthur Murphy; *The English Merchant*, by George Colman the Elder; *Almida*, by Madame Celestia; *Zobeide*, by Joseph Cradock; *Orestes*, by Thomas Francklin; and *Semiramis*, by George Ayscough. Professor Lounsbury also refers to Aaron Hill's *Roman Revenge* as drawing from Voltaire's *La Mort de César*, and Professor Nettleton mentions *Cyrus*, by John Hoole, and *Alzuma*, by Arthur Murphy, as notably displaying the influence of the French dramatist.

This list of Voltaire's plays on the English stage may be slightly expanded and amended.

A place on the list is deserved by *Matilda*, a tragedy by Thomas Francklin, acted at Drury Lane, January 29, 1775. It is a "well-naturalized" version of Voltaire's *Adélaïde du Guesclin*, a play later known as *Amélie*, or *Le Duc de Foix*. Correspondence be-

⁴ Thorkelin had already proposed *expeditus*.

⁵ The Viking ships often carried a red, blue, or green striped sail. They were frequently painted with bright colors above the water line and had shields of different colors fastened along the railing. (V. Guðmundsson in Paul's *Grundriss*², III, 467 ff.)

⁶ Professor Bright has called my attention to *itr* having been suggested by Holthausen (ed. 1906) in explanation of *icge* (l. 1107): *icge*, *itge*, weak form of *itig*. However, even if *icge* were a weak adj. here (which is at least doubtful, cf. v. Grienberger, *Anglia*, xxvii, 331) it would, as applied to gold, have to be more nearly synonymous with *scire*, 'brilliant, glittering,' than with *fāh*, 'stained, variegated,' which is closer to the meaning of O. N. *itr*.—The nearly homonymous *inco*ge in *inco*ge-lāfe, dat. sg. (l. 2578) would, but for the troublesome *n*, agree very well inasmuch as swords frequently are called *fāh*, whether with gore or with gold.